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Annex 7 Habitat and Species
Progress Report of the Parties 2016

OVERVIEW

In the Habitat and Species Annex of the 2012 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA), Canada and the United States commit to conserving, protecting, maintaining, restoring and enhancing the resilience of native species and their habitats, as well as supporting essential ecosystem services in the Basin.

The Annex requires Canada and the United States to implement several commitments to address the health of Great Lakes habitats and species, including: conducting a baseline survey against which to establish a target of net habitat gain and to measure future progress, completing the development and implementing lakewide species conservation plans, assessing gaps in current programs and initiatives, facilitating and strengthening both binational and domestic programs, and increasing awareness of habitat and species and methods to conserve, protect and enhance their resilience.

Take example and illustrate from BCS report table, i.e. – LO preyfish restoration
(*use bloater image – see ppt slide with images)*

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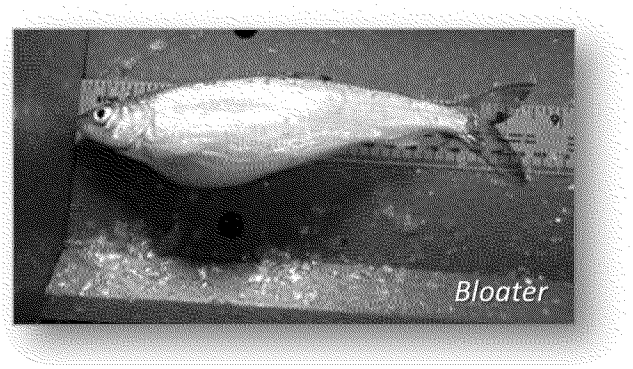
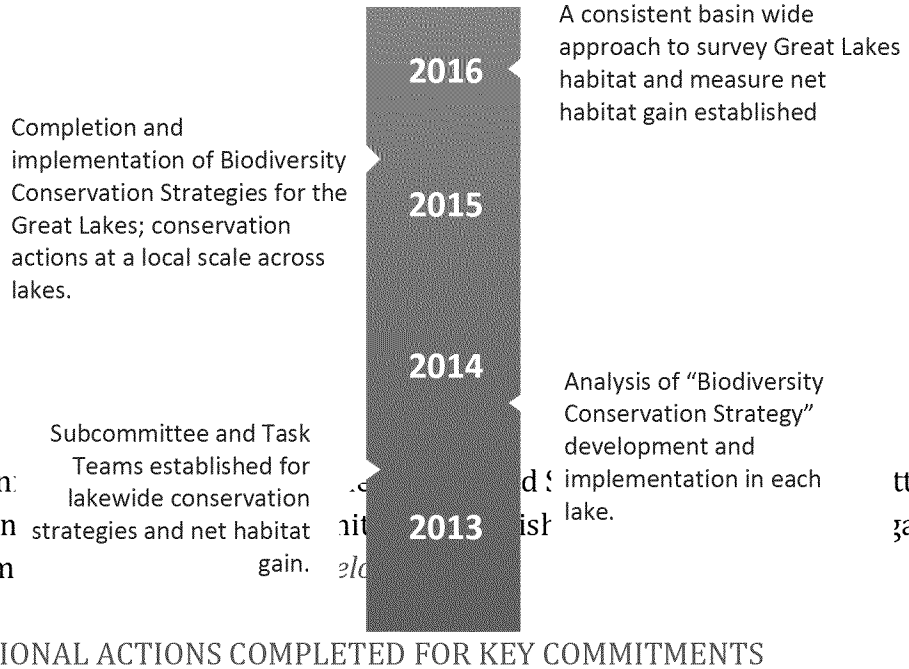


In Lake Ontario, the Lake Partnership identified the restoration of native preyfish species as a priority for implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the U.S. and Canadian agencies initiated a program to reintroduce bloater to the lake in 2012. The stocked juvenile bloaters originated from eggs collected on Lake Michigan which were hatched and reared at facilities in New York and Ontario.

Graphic: [Timeline vignette, "**Progress Toward Meeting GLWQA Commitments**"]



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BINATIONAL ACTIONS COMPLETED FOR KEY COMMITMENTS

- **By 2015, complete the binational Biodiversity Conservation Strategies for all lakes, including connecting channels.**
- **Begin implementation of priority actions identified in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategies through existing programs and agreements.**

As of February 12, 2015, this commitment has been met and lakewide habitat and species protection and restoration conservation strategies, also called Biodiversity Conservation Strategies (Strategies) or blueprints, have been developed for all five of the Great Lakes. The Strategies assess the status and threats to lakewide biodiversity and recommend conservation priorities for native species and their habitats.

Each Strategy is a product of extensive collaboration among lakewide regional and local stakeholders. They serve as a tool to foster and guide a shared implementation of priority conservation actions among federal, state, provincial, tribal, academic, municipal and watershed management agency representatives. Across the lakes there is strong support for the adaptive management approach in the planning, application and implementation of the Strategies.

The Lake Superior Partnership is currently in the process of preparing watershed-level plans to further guide and support implementation of the recently released Strategy at a local level. The Lake Ontario Partnership used the broader Lake Ontario Biodiversity Strategy to produce an implementation plan to focus on and implement priority actions within the GLWQA mandate. Other Lake Partnerships are identifying regional (or watershed based) biodiversity objectives and outlining the specific actions required to address these issues on a more manageable scale.

- **Begin implementation of priority actions identified in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategies through existing programs and agreements.**

The table below illustrates several examples as to how the Strategies are being used now in each lake basin to inform and implement priority conservation actions. OPEN FOR INPUT BY SUBCOMITTEE

Lake Basin	***Date Strategy Completed***	***Strategy Element***	***Conservation Action/Implementation***	***Stakeholders***
Lake Ontario	2009	Best-Bet Action: Restoration of native prey fish species	U.S. and Canadian agencies started a program to reintroduce bloater to the lake. Juvenile bloaters stocked today originated from eggs collected on Lake Michigan. Eggs are hatched and juveniles reared at facilities in New York and	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey

			Ontario.	
Lake Huron	2010	Priority Action: address most significant threat for Southern Georgian Bay – urban development and shoreline alterations	The *Southern Georgian Bay Shoreline Management Strategy* was developed to focus on coordinating efforts to identify restoration opportunities, guide local development and decision making, harmonizing regulatory approaches and permits for shoreline construction projects and supporting landowner stewardship of the shoreline.	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry; Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Grey-Sauble and Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authorities
Lake Erie	2012	Priority Conservation Areas identified for migratory fish	Information from conceptual models and decision support tools in priority areas has been used to strengthen funding proposals for the most important fish passage projects in the lake basin.	State of Michigan; State of Ohio; The Nature Conservancy
Lake Michigan	2012	Key strategy/Priority Area: Expand green infrastructure in the Chicago-Gary Metropolitan Area as a way to increase filtration for non-point source pollution.	The Chicago-Gary metropolitan area was identified as a priority area for implementation because of its highest biodiversity for a coastal terrestrial system with the lowest overall condition. Through partnerships such as the Chicago Wilderness and the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund, green infrastructure and storm water projects are being implemented to enhance fish, wildlife and habitat in this priority area.	Chicago Wilderness, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Chi-Cal Rivers Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; State of Illinois Coastal Program; State of Indiana Coastal Zone Management Program
Lake Superior	2015	Best-bet Action: Rehabilitation of Coaster Brook Trout populations	Applying the 'shared implementation' approach, partners are working together to implement habitat enhancement projects at remaining	The Nature Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy-Canada; U.S. Fish and

			spawning areas in Lake Superior that are critical to support healthy populations.	Wildlife Service, National Park Service; Department of Fisheries and Oceans; State of Michigan

- **Increase understanding of habitats and species to develop a baseline against which to assess targets and work toward net habitat gain.**

The major focus of the Subcommittee for the past three years has been the Net Gain commitment "Conduct a baseline survey of the existing habitat against which to establish a Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem target of net habitat gain and measure future progress". The Baseline Task Team consisting of binational, multijurisdictional members developed an approach to measure baseline conditions of habitat and monitor change over time. The Task Team engaged experts and partners around the lakes along the way through a series of binational workshops, meetings and webinars.

This approach is built upon existing Great Lakes monitoring programs and emphasizes the use of remotely sensed information for maximum data coverage. The physical characteristics of the lakes will be used map habitat types and the condition of the habitat will then be assessed. The Survey will be conducted on a reoccurring basis to track changes in the ecosystem over time and monitor progress. The approach will undergo further refinement and implementation will follow.

This effort also encompassed the other Annex 7 priorities for science to investigate tools and techniques that can assist with priority identification, and explore ways to incorporate the concepts of resilience, adaptive management and climate change adaptation strategies into efforts to conserve and protect native species and their habitat.

DOMESTIC ACTIONS TAKEN

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Canada:

Canada has multiple existing federal and provincial programs carried out domestically which contribute to the ongoing goals of Annex 7 including those by Parks Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada's Wildlife Service and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. In addition, there are many non-governmental partners making significant contributions to habitat and species conservation including the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Conservation Ontario and the many individual Conservation Authorities in the province, the Ontario Anglers and Hunters Association, Ducks Unlimited, and Stewardship Councils.

United States:

Include similar summary statements.